

**Operating Procedure for Bristol Division of the Probate and Family Court
Under Standing Order 1 – 21, effective July 12, 2021**

A. General information:

Effective July 12, 2021, the Probate and Family Court will be open to conduct all emergency and non-emergency court business in person, except for the matters identified in Paragraph C below and any matter that a judge determines shall be held virtually.

The ability to conduct in-person hearings depends upon successful compliance with all safety protocols established by the Trial Court, including, but not limited to, Trial Court occupancy limits.

Parties may file pleadings by US mail, in person, or by e-filing where available. Email filings will be accepted when done so by a Court Service Center staff member or by an attorney volunteering through a Lawyer for the Day program on behalf of a self-represented litigant or if specifically authorized by the Supreme Judicial Court or the Executive Office of the Trial Court. Other email filings may be allowed at the discretion of each Register of Probate. Drop boxes may be available to file pleadings in some court locations.

The Bristol Division will not accept emailed filings in the Registry or in the Judicial Lobby, except as permitted by Standing Order 1-21, as noted above. Please do not email filings/pleadings unless specifically instructed to do so by a member of the Judicial staff or the Judge.

The Bristol Division will maintain a drop box at the front door of the Taunton Trial Court and Fall River Probate and Family Courthouse and inside the Taunton and Fall River Registry Office. Pleadings may be left in the box. They will be retrieved several times per business day and processed in the usual course. Any questions concerning the drop box may be directed to Assistant Register Julianne Clark at juliane.clark@jud.state.ma.us or 508-977-6040.

Electronic signatures will continue to be used, consistent with the current order of the Supreme Judicial Court, unless and until otherwise amended by subsequent orders or rules.

Virtual registries may continue to be used. Virtual registries offer all of the assistance normally available during an in-person visit, including face-to-face contact, the ability to obtain and get assistance with court forms, and access to court documents and docket information. [Information about virtual registries can be found here.](#)

The Bristol Registry will continue to maintain a Virtual Registry. The Virtual Registry will be staffed Monday through Friday, 9:00 am to noon and 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm. The Zoom link for the Virtual Registry is <https://www.zoomgov.com/j/1612606196>

You can also access the Virtual Registry by Telephone Dial in: 1-646-828-7666, Meeting ID:1612606196.

Through the Virtual Registry, you may be able to access the Virtual Lawyer for the Day and the Kinship Navigator Program. These programs are designed to assist self-represented litigants as they navigate the Court system. The Lawyer of the Day schedule can be found at www.bristolcountyprobate.org

Any questions concerning the virtual registry may be directed to Assistant Register Juliane Clark at juliane.clark@jud.state.ma.us or 508-977-6040.

B. In-Person Proceedings:

As of July 12, 2021, the Probate and Family Court will expand the scheduling of in-person hearings for all matters, except for the matters identified in Paragraph C below and any matter that a judge determines shall be held virtually. In-person hearings will be scheduled for the next available date and will be conducted on a staggered schedule.

YOUR CASE MAY BE REFERRED TO PROBATION FOR DISPUTE INTERVENTION- YOU WILL BE NOTIFIED IN ADVANCE BY PROBATION IF YOU NEED TO APPEAR BEFORE YOUR SCHEDULED HEARING TIME. IF THERE ARE ANY FINANCIAL ISSUES IN YOUR CASE, YOU MUST BRING A COMPLETED FINANCIAL STATEMENT TO COURT FOR EVERY HEARING AND DISPUTE INTERVENTION. THE FINANCIAL STATEMENT FORMS ARE AVAILABLE IN THE REGISTRY/VIRTUAL REGISTRY AND ON THE MASS.GOV WEBSITE.

Beginning on January 1, 2022, all proceedings will be scheduled before assigned judges as follows:

JUDGE CRONAN

Monday

8:30am Virtual Uncontested Adoptions
9:00am 1A or 1B with Agreement Divorces and other virtual type
10:00am In Person Pre-Trials
11:00am In Person Motions
11:00am Contempt/review/guardianship
12:00pm In Person Motions
12:00pm Contempt/review/guardianship
2:00PM In Person Pre-Trials

Tuesday

9:00am Trial

Wednesday

8:30am Virtual Uncontested Adoptions
9:00am 1A or 1B with Agreement Divorces and other virtual type
10:00am In Person Pre-Trials
11:00am In Person Motions
11:00am Contempt/review/guardianship
12:00pm In Person Motions
12:00pm Contempt/review/guardianship
2:00PM In Person Pre-Trials

Thursday

8:30am Virtual Uncontested Adoptions
9:00am 1A or 1B with Agreement Divorces and other virtual type
10:00am In Person Pre-Trials
11:00am In Person Motions
11:00am Contempt/review/guardianship
12:00pm In Person Motions
12:00pm Contempt/review/guardianship
2:00pm In Person Pre-Trials

Friday

9:00am Trial

JUDGE FIELD

Monday

8:30am Virtual Uncontested Adoptions
9:00am 1A or 1B with Agreement Divorces and other virtual type
10:00am In Person Pre-Trials
11:00am In Person Motions
11:00am Contempt/review/guardianship
12:00pm In Person Motions
12:00pm Contempt/review/guardianship
2:00PM In Person Pre-Trials

Tuesday

8:30am Virtual Uncontested Adoptions
9:00am 1A or 1B with Agreement Divorces and other virtual type
10:00am In Person Pre-Trials
11:00am In Person Motions
11:00am Contempt/review/guardianship
12:00pm In Person Motions
12:00pm Contempt/review/guardianship
2:00PM In Person Pre-Trials

Wednesday

9:00am Trial

Thursday

9:00am Trial

Friday

8:30am Virtual Uncontested Adoptions
9:00am 1A or 1B with Agreement Divorces and other virtual type
10:00am In Person Pre-Trials
11:00am In Person Motions
11:00am Contempt/review/guardianship
12:00pm In Person Motions
12:00pm Contempt/review/guardianship
2:00PM In Person Pre-Trials

JUDGE JACOBS

Monday 9:00am Trial

Tuesday
9:00am Trial

Wednesday
8:30am Virtual Uncontested Adoptions
9:00am 1A or 1B with Agreement Divorces and other virtual ty
10:00am In Person Pre-Trials
11:00am In Person Motions
11:00am Contempt/review/guardianship
12:00pm In Person Motions
12:00pm Contempt/review/guardianship
2:00PM In Person Pre-Trials

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11:00am In Person Motions
11:00am Contempt/review/guardianship
12:00pm In Person Motions
12:00pm Contempt/review/guardianship
2:00PM In Person Pre-Trials

Friday
8:30am Virtual Uncontested Adoptions
9:00am 1A or 1B with Agreement Divorces and other virtual ty
10:00am In Person Pre-Trials
11:00am In Person Motions
11:00am Contempt/review/guardianship
12:00pm In Person Motions
12:00pm Contempt/review/guardianship
2:00PM In Person Pre-Trials

JUDGE McMAHON

Monday

9:00am Trial

Tuesday

8:30am Virtual Uncontested Adoptions

9:00am 1A or 1B with Agreement Divorces and other virtua

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11:00am Contempt/review/guardianship

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Wednesday

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11:00am In Person Motions

11:00am Contempt/review/guardianship

12:00pm In Person Motions

12:00pm Contempt/review/guardianship

2:00PM In Person Pre-Trials

General questions concerning staggered scheduling may be directed to Assistant Register Julianne Clark at juliane.clark@jud.state.ma.us or 508-977-6040.

Questions regarding a specific case may be directed to the Judicial Team for the list Judge.

Judicial Teams-

Judge Field- AJCM Camille Chang, Session Clerk Irene Jusseaume, Judicial Secretary Mary Martel

Judge Cronan- AJCM Christopher Carey, Session Clerk Debra Kravitz, Support Staff- Linda Andrade and Florentina Kitchen

Judge Jacobs- AJCM Andrea Dunbar, Session Clerk Sarah Serpa, Judicial Secretary Mary Martel

Judge McMahon- AJCM Tricia Poole, Session Clerk Michael Taylor, Support Staff- Linda Andrade and Florentina Kitchen

If notice has already gone out and a matter is scheduled for a virtual hearing on or after July 12, 2021, the matter will still be held virtually unless the assigned judge determines the matter should be heard in person and the parties are notified of such change.

Where an in-person hearing is scheduled, a party may request that the hearing be conducted virtually, and the judge will rule on the request.

Requests to conduct a hearing virtually shall be submitted by mail or efile with an affidavit outlining the reasons for the request and a copy shall be sent to the opposing party or counsel of record. These requests will be handled administratively and you will be notified if the request is granted. If the request is not granted, you must appear in person.

Alternatively, a judge, upon request, may authorize a participant (an attorney, party, or witness) to appear virtually while other participants appear in person, so long as it is consistent with due process and fundamental fairness. A participant who requests to appear virtually for an

otherwise in-person proceeding shall have no grounds to object to other participants appearing in person.

Requests to appear virtually shall be submitted by mail or efilings with an affidavit outlining the reasons for the request and a copy shall be sent to the opposing party or counsel of record. These requests will be handled administratively and you will be notified if the request is granted. If the request is not granted, you must appear in person.

C. Virtual Proceedings:

The following matters shall be held virtually and on a staggered schedule:

1. Uncontested adoptions, unless the assigned judge determines that the matter should be heard in person;
2. Uncontested divorces;
3. Rogers reviews;
4. Best efforts § 29B annual reviews – DCF custody;
5. Any action involving child support only, except for contempt actions;
6. Case Management/Status conferences; and
7. Discovery motions.

The Court will conduct virtual hearings from 8:30 to 10:00 am. Cases will be scheduled for either 8:30 or 9:00. For details regarding each judge's scheduling of virtual hearings after January 1, 2022, please refer to section B, above.

Matters that are generally handled administratively (e.g., marriage without delay; joint modification); uncontested/assented to motions (e.g., appointment of GAL; continue date of hearing; file marriage certificate late); and uncontested/routine allowables in probate actions (e.g., informal petition; transfer of guardianship or conservatorship from another state; accounts; appointment of GAL; license to sell; alternative service; waiver of sureties; motion to file death certificate late) will continue to be handled administratively. If such a matter is not handled administratively, a virtual hearing will be scheduled.

In the absence of exceptional circumstances, as determined by the judge conducting the hearing, no party or attorney for a party may be physically present in the courtroom for a scheduled virtual hearing.

However, in cases with one or more self-represented litigants, judges shall consider the possibility that self-represented litigants may have limited access to the technology needed or limited experience with such technology and either assist the self-represented litigant or offer the option to appear in person.

A judge may also consider matters through an administrative review process and determine motions in accordance with Rule 78.

Any questions concerning administrative allowances may be directed to Assistant Register Juliane Clark at juliane.clark@jud.state.ma.us or 508-977-6040.

D. Protocol in the event of a court closure by the Trial Court:

Cases that are already scheduled for hearing shall proceed remotely as scheduled **to the extent possible**. In the event a matter is rescheduled, parties will be notified.

All new pleadings shall be filed via U.S. mail or through E-filing. Routine/non-emergency filings will be processed when the court re-opens.

Telephone inquiries concerning emergencies shall be made to the HELP LINE at mass.gov or 508-977-6040 and messages answered by staff and referred to AJCM who shall then review matter with the assigned Judge if appropriate.

If the assigned Judge deems the matter to be an emergency, all reasonable efforts shall be made to conduct a telephonic/video hearing. Absent exigent circumstances, the hearing shall be recorded. All parties shall be sworn in. CARI's shall be requested of CPO and scanned to hearing judge. At no time shall the private contact information for any Judge, JCM/AJCM or other support staff be disclosed to any litigant, attorney or other individual.

*All staffing models and rotations assume all staff are physically able to work. Changes to staffing and rotations shall be made as needed.

E. Contact Information:

Emergency phone number	508-977-6040	
Emergency email address	bristolprobate@jud.state.ma.us	
Registry phone number	508-977-6040	
Probation contact	Michele Mullin	508-977-4970
Judicial Case Manager	Lesley Goldsmith	508-977-6156
Assistant Judicial Case Manager	Camille Chang	camille.chang@jud.state.ma.us 508-977-4988 (Field,J)
Assistant Judicial Case Manager	Miriam Babin	miriam.babin@jud.state.ma.us 508-999-5249 x224 (McMahon, J.)
Assistant Judicial Case Manager	Tricia Poole	tricia.poole@jud.state.ma.us 508-672-1751x240 (Jacobs,J.)
Assistant Judicial Case Manager	Andrea Dunbar	andrea.dunbar@jud.state.ma.us 508-672-1751x240 (Jacobs,J.)
Assistant Judicial Case Manager	Christopher Carey	christopher.carey@jud.state.ma.us 508-999-5249 x226 (Cronan, J.)
Sessions Clerk	Irene Jusseaume	irene.jusseaume@jud.state.ma.us 508-977-4995 (Field, J.)
Sessions Clerk	Michael Taylor	michael.taylor@jud.state.ma.us 508-999-5249 x224 (McMahon, J.)
Sessions Clerk	Debra Kravitz	debra.kravitz@jud.state.ma.us 508-999-5249 x226 (Cronan, J.)
Sessions Clerk	Sarah Serpa	sarah.serpa@jud.state.ma.us 508-672-1751x240 (Jacobs,J.)

Judicial Secretary	Mary Martel	mary.martel@jud.state.ma.us 508-977-4995 (Field, J)
HAA	Flo Kitchen	florentina.kitchen@jud.state.ma.us 508-999-5249 x226 (McMahon, J. and Cronan, J.)
Operations Supervisor	Linda Andrade	linda.andrade@jud.state.ma.us 508-999-5249 x224 (McMahon,J and Cronan, J.)
Register of Probate	Thomas Hoyer	thomas.hoyer@jud.state.ma.us 508-977-6040
Assistant Register	Juliane Clark	juliane.clark@jud.state.ma.us 508-977-6040